

Lowell Public Schools

Update on Student Assignment Policy Analysis Considerations for Discussion

March 9, 2021



Guiding Questions

- Does our current school assignment policy result in equitable student distribution across race, language, economic status, gender and other demographic factors?
- Does our current school assignment policy result in equitable access for all student demographics to programs and choice opportunities across our district?
- Does our current school assignment policy perpetuate inequalities across our schools?
- How do we make all schools equally desirable for all students? How do we shift misperceptions of some schools?

Agenda

1. Review proposed kindergarten reassignment policy
2. Review outcomes of parent focus groups and survey related to potential changes in the 2021-22 school assignment policy
3. Review the proposed options for changes to next year's incoming kindergarten assignment process
 - What can be implemented next year with relative ease
 - What can be implemented next year with detailed planning and budget allocation
 - What should continue to be analyzed and explored in order to truly realize equitable school opportunities and access across the district
4. Discuss immediate next steps for revising the K-12 school assignment policy for 2021-22

Family Focus Groups

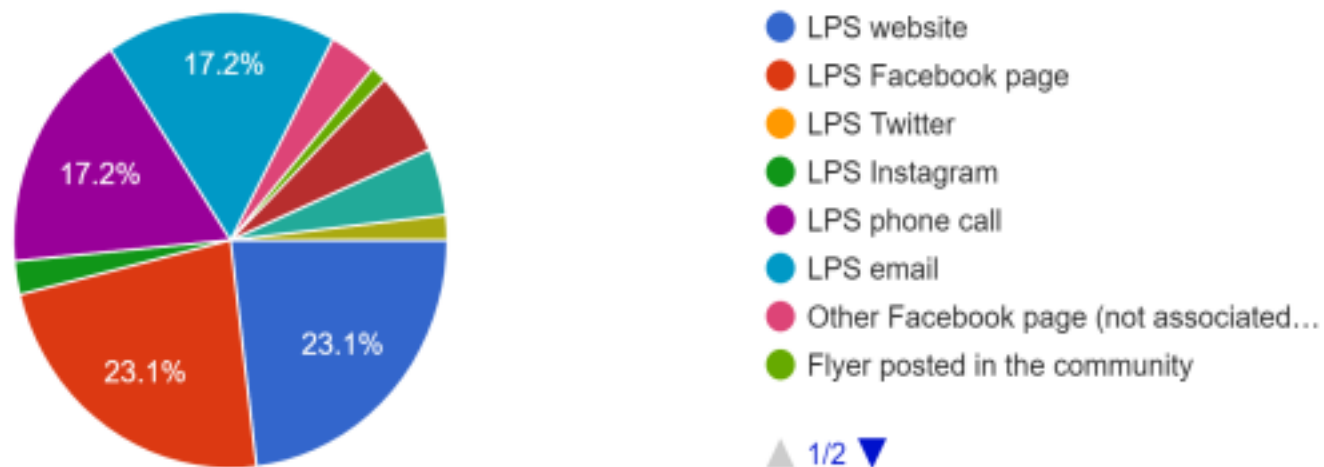
Sessions – 4 sessions in English; 2 sessions in Spanish, Khmer, Portuguese, Swahili

Guiding Questions

- How did you find out about registration?
- What informs your decision to choose a particular school?
- How important are special programs at schools?
- Is the feeder middle school a factor in choosing an elementary school?

How did you hear about registration for the 2020-21 school year?

169 responses



What do parents look for in selecting a school?

General Feedback:

- Consideration for the feeder middle school
- Preference for proximity to home
- Neighborhood and school reputation considered (including online ratings/test scores of schools)
- Class size matters
- Communication with school principal and front office makes a difference in school selection (especially during open houses and school visits)
- School times that are compatible with family/work schedule are important (including before and after school program opportunities for extended day)
- Transportation accessibility is important (not all walk routes are equal and factors such as young children, strollers, inclement weather must be considered)

What do parents look for in selecting a school?

How important are special programs at a particular school?

- A few parents commented that a particular program at a school is important (such as a CSA program) or preferred (arts program, library services, before & after school programs)
- However, a majority of parents across all sessions were not aware of programs during school selection

Is the feeder Middle School a factor in choosing an elementary school?

- Overall, majority of parents do factor in the feeder middle school
- Results from several Zoom polls:
 - Yes – 61%
 - Somewhat – 28%
 - No – 11%

Additional Comments

Zoning:

- School zones can be unclear to parents
- Parents noted that rezoning does not matter as long as child doesn't need to transfer from their current school

Access to Information:

- LPS website could be easier to navigate
- Parents expressed desire to keep up to date with more information
- Parents expressed desire for more multilingual staff to support questions

District Satisfaction Survey Feedback (n=3,736)

Question: Was your child(ren) assigned to your first or second choice school placement?

Yes - 82%

Question: If your child's placement was changed due to the pandemic, how satisfied are you with your child's current placement?

Satisfied - 43%

Question: How important is transportation?

Important or Very Important - 58%

Question: Having access to transportation may affect my decision to send my child(ren) to a particular school?

Would Affect Decision - 37%

2021-22 School Assignment Policy Considerations

Considerations for placing students utilizing the current two zone structure

1. Revise school placement weights and closely monitor the balance of diverse students across school placement
 - ie. proximity to school, race, gender, economic status and language
2. Revise lottery placement weights
 - Consider factors other than solely “siblings”
3. Implement the city-wide lotteries at several points throughout the year with full school placement targeted for mid-August
 - ie. Elementary School Kindergarten Class - 50% lottery placement in June, 25% in July, 25% in August
4. Begin the “first-come, first-served” assignment process after mid-August
5. Communicate to incoming kindergarten families that the middle school feeder pattern is under review

English Learner Programmatic Considerations

- Establish newcomer classrooms (Access Levels 1.0-2.9) strategically placed across the district
- Establish combo classes to better serve ELs across grades (ie K-1, 2-4, 5-6 and 7-8)
- Adopt a class-size capacity for newcomer/SLIFE classrooms
- Hire native language paraprofessionals/ESL tutors - to support schools with high newcomer enrollment

English Learner Programmatic Considerations -

Draft for Discussion

Neighborhood 1 - Khmer and Spanish

Elementary

Bailey - Newcomer Program

Morey

Murkland - Newcomer Program

Washington

Bartlett C.P.

Neighborhood 2 - Portuguese and Spanish

Elementary

Moody

Reilly - Newcomer Program

Rogers STEM Program

English Learner Programmatic Considerations

Draft for Discussion

Neighborhood 3 - Portuguese, Khmer, Spanish, and Low Incident Languages

Elementary

Lincoln

Shaughnessy - Newcomer Program

Pyne Arts

Neighborhood 4 - Spanish, Gujarati, and Low Incident Languages

Elementary

Greenhalge – Newcomer Program

McAuliffe

McAvinnue

Pawtucketville Mem. – Newcomer Program

Policy Considerations that Require Further Analysis and Community Discussion

1. Review of Current City-wide Schools and Magnet Schools
 - Specialized Programming
 - Transportation Data (disaggregated by sub-groups)
2. Conduct an analysis of current specialized programs, including before and after-care options, at elementary schools
3. Examine elementary/middle school feeder patterns to determine if a different assignment can lead to greater diversity and equity
4. Explore middle school magnet and special programs opportunities as a strategy for diversifying and creating equal desirability across schools
5. Engage in a Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) process that engages families as the decision-makers for school improvements in their community that would lead to increased desirability of all schools as high-quality options

Revisiting Policy Considerations

1. What specialized programs currently exist in the district or might be developed that appeal to a broad range of families - thus impacting the opportunity to attract greater socio-economic diversity? *(ie. technology, arts, dual language, Montessori, community school model, etc)*
2. In what ways could the current “choice system” of assignment be improved to yield more equitable and integrated student populations? *(ie. weighted lottery based on factors other than just sibling preference such as economic status, language needs, special needs, parent’s education level. Different neighborhoods could also be considered in city-wide/magnet school lotteries and admission.)*

Revisiting Policy Considerations (Cont.)

3. How might redrawn attendance zone boundaries that include a small cluster of schools create an economically diverse student population?
4. In what ways should we encourage intra-district transfers as a method of school choice?
5. How might we expand and prioritize the integration of curricula which reflects the needs of a school's culturally and economically diverse student body (classroom level)?
6. How might the district partner with community and governmental agencies to review inclusionary zoning policies that result in mixed-income, economically integrated neighborhoods (community impact)?